

DIOCESAN NEWS

Brother says govt. should help schools

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — A recent U.S. Supreme Court decision allowing public-school teachers into non-public schools was good news, but Catholic schools supporters shouldn't get too excited about it, according to Brother Peter Pontolillo, MS.

A former Catholic schools superintendent in Texas, Brother Pontolillo currently lives in Rome and is secretary general of the Society of Mary. He made his remarks during an afternoon speech July 10 at the Institute on Catholic Education at the University of Rochester.

The July 10-11 conference drew 85 participants from across the country and from Guam and Kenya, according to Sister Edwardine Weaver, RSM, director of the Warner Graduate School of Education and Human Development, which sponsored the institute.

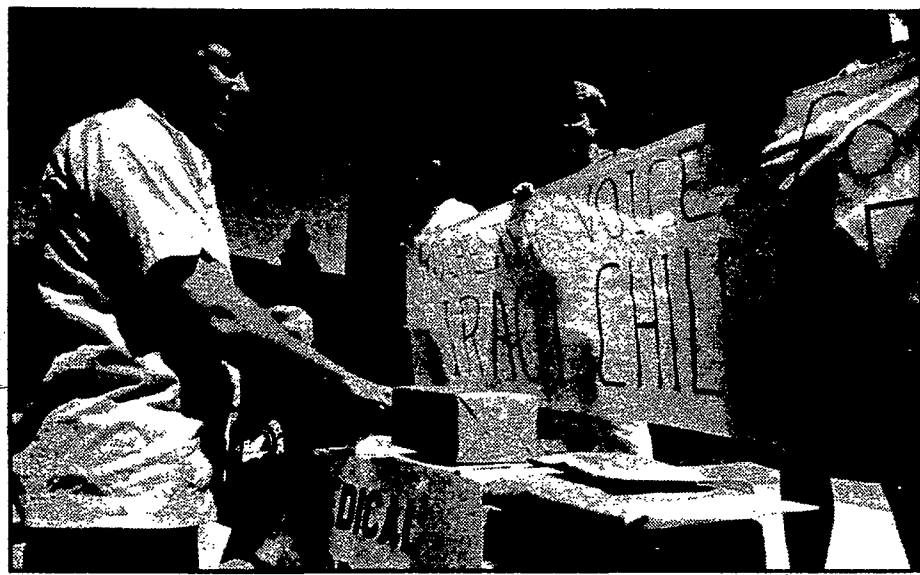
In his speech, Brother Pontolillo referred to the June 23 Supreme Court decision that reversed a 1985 ruling that had barred publicly funded remedial teachers from non-public schools. Such teachers had been going into non-public schools since the 1960s under a congressional mandate. But the 1985 *Aguilar vs. Felton* ruling ended the practice, because the court thought it violated the constitutional separation of church and state.

"It's gratifying to see the U.S. Supreme Court — after its horrendous decision 10 years ago — reverse itself," said Brother Pontolillo, who was also the first president of the Catholic School Administrators Association of New York State in the 1970s.

But Brother Pontolillo noted that much of the opposition to the ruling came from public school and federal education administrators fed up with paying the high costs of providing remedial education to non-public students at costly off-site learning centers or trailers that stood outside non-public schools.

A desire to save money — and not a belief in the equality of all schoolchildren — drove opposition to *Felton*, he noted.

Non-public school students are seen as second-class citizens because many U.S. citizens, including Catholics, have bought in-



Matthew Scott/Staff photographer

Embargo protest

As part of a July 9 protest at the Kenneth B. Keating Federal Building, Rochester, Father James Callan (left) adds medical supplies to other parcels to Iraq rejected by the U.S. Postal Service. The protesters were unable to mail medical supplies to Iraq due to a U.S.-backed U.N. embargo.

to the idea that taxpayer supported education can only take place in state-run schools, he said. However, many countries, he continued, fund both privately operated schools and state-run schools because they see a compelling interest in making sure every child gets an education.

"Most countries in the world provide aid to all schools," he said. "It's not a religious issue as such ..."

Brother Pontolillo said it was time for U.S. Catholic-school parents to organize an aggressive national lobbying effort to create a system in which parents can use tax funds to choose whatever school they want for their children, public or private. He cautioned his listeners that many public-school supporters will say they support parental choice in education, but would limit the range of choices to various public schools.

"We cannot afford to let the public school lobby turn it into public school choice," he said.

Catholic-school parents save their local public school districts money by keeping their kids out of public schools, Brother Pontolillo noted. He speculated that the government would be willing to embrace parental choice that included non-public schools if the U.S. bishops threatened to close the nation's Catholic schools.

"The vast majority of public school districts could not absorb our children, except in a few remote districts," he said.

In a follow-up interview with the *Catholic Courier* July 11, Brother Pontolillo acknowledged that opponents to tax funding for non-public schools have legitimate concerns.

For example, he said that non-public schools receiving public funds should be held to the same academic standards as public schools — an obligation most Catholic schools fulfill. However, he said, not all non-public schools in the country adhere to such standards.

He added that any school receiving public funds should have to adhere to the nation's civil rights laws.

He also said that Catholic-school teachers — who generally receive far less pay than public-school teachers — have the same right to organize unions as do public-school teachers. But he also said he didn't want to see organized Catholic teachers have "adversarial" relationships with schools. He said he would want Catholic teachers unions to follow a cooperative model of negotiating salaries and benefits with school leaders.

He added that he would like Catholics in general to realize that Catholic-school teachers are underpaid, and that many Catholic schools struggle financially to stay open.

"I think the reason for that is we haven't challenged Catholic people in general to tithing," he said. "Many of us believe that the church has not worked hard enough to ensure (adequate) salaries and benefits."

Obituary

Sr. Mary Hilaire Gaelens; educator, administrator

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

Sister Mary Hilaire Gaelens, RSM, an esteemed educator, diocesan official and parish leader, died July 6, 1997, after a recurrence of cancer. She was 68.

Sister Hilaire entered the Sisters of Mercy in 1952 and professed her perpetual vows in 1958. She graduated from Our Lady of Mercy High School and also earned degrees from the Rochester Business Institute, Albany's College of St. Rose and Boston College.

Following a stint (1955-57) as teacher at St. Thomas the Apostle School in Irondequoit, Sister Hilaire spent the next 20 years as business instructor at Notre Dame High School in Elmira. She also served as Notre Dame's office manager, treasurer and business manager (1964-77).

Sister Hilaire joined the diocesan permanent diaconate program as administrative assistant when it was founded in 1978. She worked closely with the program's first class, which was ordained in 1982.

During this time, Sister Hilaire also

served as assistant director (1979) and director (1980) for the summer school program at St. Bernard's Seminary. From 1979 to 1981 she served St. Bernard's as a member of the spiritual formation team and spiritual director. She sat on several diocesan committees and was president of the diocesan Sisters' Council (1982-83).

In 1983, Sister Hilaire began an eight-year stint as director of the diocesan Division of Special Pastoral Ministries. This department served as a forerunner to the Office of Parish Support Ministries.

When she left her diocesan position in 1991, Father John Mulligan, vicar general, praised Sister Hilaire in a newsletter for Pastoral Center staff members:

"Sister Hilaire became a familiar figure at diocesan functions. Her striking presence and diction as a lector at diocesan celebrations at the (Sacred Heart) Cathedral reflected her teaching and business background. And whenever some key organizational detail needed attention, she graciously consented to attend to the matter at hand."

Sister Hilaire served as pastoral associ-

ate at St. Anne Church in Rochester from 1991 until her death. Father Frank Lioi, St. Anne's pastor, noted that Sister Hilaire often oversaw parish operations when he was out of town.

"That was the nice thing about her background. She could handle any situation," Father Lioi said.

Father Lioi added that Sister Hilaire provided a special ministry to senior citizens in arranging visits by others and frequently traveling to see infirm parishioners.

"She was a grand lady — a woman of elegance, of competence, of compassion, of faith. A grand lady indeed," Father Lioi said during his homily at Sister Hilaire's funeral Mass. The liturgy was held July 9 at St. Anne Church, and interment was at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery.

Sister Hilaire is survived by her brother, Father Albert R. Gaelens, CSB; sister-in-law, Florence Gaelens; nephews, nieces, grand-nephews and grandnieces; and the Sisters of Mercy.

Donations in Sister Hilaire's memory may be made to the Sisters of Mercy, 1437 Blossom Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14610.

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The Pilgrim Virgin Statue of Our Lady of Fatima will visit the Rochester Diocese August 1-22, 1997



- Friday, August 1, 1997**
St. Louis, Pittsford 9:30am—8pm
11am Mass—Father Albert M. Shamon
Living Rosary, Joyful Mysteries
- Saturday, August 2, 1997**
St. Mary, Dansville 11am—3pm
St. John the Evangelist, W. Ridge Rd.
..... 7—9pm
- Sunday, August 3, 1997**
St. Anthony, Rochester 10am—3pm
- Monday, August 4, 1997**
Holy Name of Jesus, Rochester 9am—5pm
Holy Trinity, Webster 7:15pm
Holy Hour 8:15pm
- Tuesday, August 5, 1997**
Holy Trinity, Webster 9—11am
St. Michael, Newark 4-9pm
- Wednesday, August 6, 1997**
Our Lady of Victory/St. Joseph, Rochester
..... 10:30am—3pm
- Thursday, August 7, 1997**
Holy Spirit, Penfield 9:30am—8pm
- Friday, August 8, 1997**
St. Thomas the Apostle, Irondequoit
..... 10am—7:30pm
Living Rosary, Sorrowful Mysteries
- Saturday, August 9, 1997**
St. Thomas the Apostle, Irondequoit
..... 8am
- Rosary March • 9-11:30am**
St. Joseph Park to Planned Parenthood
St. John's Home, Rochester Noon-3pm
Christ the King, Rochester 5pm
- Sunday, August 10, 1997**
Christ the King, Rochester 9am—7pm
- Monday, August 11, 1997**
Mt. Carmel Hospice 9am—2pm
St. Christopher, N. Chili 4-9pm
- Tuesday, August 12, 1997**
St. Mark, Rochester 5—9pm
- Wednesday, August 13, 1997**
Problem Pregnancy Help Center, Rochester
..... 11am—4pm
- Thursday, August 14, 1997**
Assumption of Our Lady, Fairport
..... 10am—8pm
- Friday, August 15, 1997**
St. Stanislaus, Hudson/Norton
..... English Mass 8am; Latin Mass, Noon;
..... English Mass, 5pm; Polish Mass, 7:30 pm
- Saturday, August 16, 1997**
St. Stephen, Geneva 4:30pm—9:30pm
- Sunday, August 17, 1997**
St. Michael, Lyons 10am—7pm
..... A Full Day of Devotion
- Monday, August 18, 1997**
Roman Catholic Community of the 19th
Ward of Our Lady of Good Counsel,
Rochester 7:30am—9pm
- Tuesday, August 19, 1997**
Holy Cross, Charlotte 1—9pm
- Wednesday, August 20, 1997**
St. John the Evangelist, Spencerport
..... 9am—8pm
- Thursday, August 21, 1997**
St. Jude, Gates 8:30am—7pm
- Friday, August 22, 1997**
Sacred Heart Cathedral, Rochester
..... Noon—5:30pm (Mass and Reception)
Living Rosary, Glorious Mysteries

For more information, call:
Vivian Ripton • 716-387-9662
Edward Ferraro • 716-381-0772
Mary Kelly • 716-377-1158

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